R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 014 749 CG 000 830

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUTONOMY.
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GODDARD COLL., PLAINFIELD, VT.
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.68 15P.

DESCRIPTORS- *STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, *COLLEGE STUDENTS, EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, STUDENT COLLEGE RELATIONSHIP, *COLLEGE ROLE, *STATISTICAL DATA, RESEARCH, STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX, OMNIBUS PERSONALITY INVENTORY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUTONOMY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS IS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL AND INSTRUMENTAL INDEPENDENCE AND THE RECOGNITION OF INTERDEPENDENCE. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INDEPENDENCE INVOLVES DISENGAGEMENT FROM, AND REBELLIOUS FEELINGS TOWARD AUTHORITY FIGURES AND LEADS TO MATURITY WITH RECIPROCAL RESPECT FOR ADULTS AND RECOGNITION OF WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS IN THE SELF AND OTHERS. INSTRUMENTAL INDEPENDENCE CONSISTS OF THE ABILITY TO BE MOBILE AND CARRY ON ACTIVITIES INDEPENDENTLY. SUCH DEVELOPMENT IN THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT IS INFLUENCED BY TEACHING PRACTICES AND OBJECTIVES, CURRICULAR FLEXIBILITY, OFF- AND ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OLDER PERSONS. EXCERPTS FROM SELF-EVALUATIONS WRITTEN OVER A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD BY A COLLEGE GIRL ARE PRESENTED FOR ILLUSTRATION AND INTERPRETATION. DATA RELATED TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IS ANALYZED. TO EVALUATE EMOTIONAL INDEPENDENCE, STUDENTS FROM EIGHT COLLEGES WERE ADMINISTERED, IN THEIR FIRST AND FOURTH YEAR, SIX SCALES FROM THE OMNIBUS PERSONALITY INVENTORY AND THREE SCALES FROM THE STERN ACTIVITIES INDEX. INSTRUMENTAL INDEPENDENCE WAS EVALUATED AT VARIOUS PERIODS DURING THE FOUR YEARS, USING FACULTY RATINGS OF SEMESTER RECORDS BASED UPON A PREPARED FRAMEWORK. THE FACULTY ALSO RATED STUDENTS ON FOUR QUESTIONS RELATED TO RECOGNITION AND ACCEPTANCE OF INTERDEPENDENCE. (PS)

ED014749

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The Development of Autonomy*

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Project on Student Development in Small Colleges

The development of autonomy involves three major dimensions of change: the development of emotional independence, (1,4,6), the development of instrumental independence (7,9), and the recognition of interdependence (5,10,11). Such development in the college setting is influenced by teaching practices and objectives, by curricular flexibility, by off-campus experiences and responsibilities, by opportunities to assume responsibilities within the college community, and by the quality of relationships with older persons.

First, a case history for one level of illustration and documentation, and then some statistical findings which support the clinical impressions and theoretical framework.

Case History

The following comments are excerpts from self-evaluations written over a four-year period. At the end of her first semester a girl, here called June, says, "I have learned a lot about other people and myself. . . . I have gained in self-confidence. I am more self-responsible. I do not have to rely on other people to do my thinking. I have learned to live and work with people of my own age in a community situation. I have more self-respect. I do not allow people to take advantage of me. I am more outspoken. I have learned to take the initiative, to be independent." She already sounds qualified for her degree!

By the end of the second semester however, perspective begins to creep in. She says, "In last semester's evaluation I said that I had become more self-confident, self-responsible, out-spoken, that I had learned to take the initiative and that I had gained in self-respect. I have learned that these are all quite relative and that there will continue to be constant growth for me in these areas throughout my stay at Goddard. I have discovered that I have my own set of morals more or less the same but apart from my parents. I have done some thinking about them and I have attempted to be more consistent in living by them.

"I have discovered that I can write papers and write them well. I no longer have a fear of writing and I found that this

*Preparation of this report was supported in part by a Ford Foundation grant for the Goddard College Experiment in College Curriculum Organization, and in part by the National Institute of Mental Health, MH01929-02.

CG 000 830

has cut down tremendously my procrastination. I am doing more and more reading as time goes on and have found that I am being more and more critical of what I read. I have learned to distinguish fact from theory, and not to depend on the printed word as always being the 'truth' or 'right'."

At the end of the third semester her focus shifts from the impact of study and the work term to that of interpersonal relationships and community responsibilities. She says, "My growth socially has come with increased self-confidence. Because I would not allow people to step on me their respect for me grew, and with it my respect for myself. I was elected president of my house and as such, representative to House Council. I learned a great deal from this experience of organization, responsibility, and human relations. Since this was the first of this kind of experience for me I felt I left much to be desired. But, all considered, I think I made a good beginning."

By the end of the fifth semester ideas about the future are becoming more sharply defined and a concrete purpose has developed which orients her study. She says, "At the beginning of the semester I started planning for a study work term in Mexico. To make this possible I found I would have to earn at least $200 before the end of the semester. I spent an average of 12 hours a week working on various off-campus jobs, doing such things as washing windows, cooking, washing and ironing clothes, and washing and waxing floors. I didn't achieve my specific goal of $200 but I did earn enough so that by borrowing the rest I need through a bank, I will be able to go. . . .

"I find this semester that I have become much less dependent upon my family and those around me at Goddard for moral and financial support. I think that this has had a lot to do with the fact that I lived and worked away from home during the summer and the realization that I could handle most situations on my own. The experience during the summer and my work experience this semester have helped me become a more self-confident and self-sufficient person."

During this fifth semester she undertook two independent studies in preparation for her winter months in Mexico, a study of Mexican history and culture, and study of the Spanish language. In evaluating the first she says, "Through dealing with the problems I faced in this study and the helpful criticism of my instructor, I became aware of the following things which I feel are necessary to further study in this area: (1) how to apply basic research methods and techniques, (2) the importance of having a purpose, (3) where to find resources and how to use them, and (4) what to include in a research paper and how to organize the necessary material. This study made evident to me a need to gain greater understanding of economics and the Spanish language before I can adequately continue research in this area."

Upon return from her Mexican study term she observes, "Through this experience I found out more about myself, my potentials and limitation. . . . I think I could confidently manage the initial getting established in another country with

knowing little or none of the language should I have the opportunity again. . . . I have gained considerably in self-confidence and self-direction."

Her comments at the end of the first semester of her senior year are: "All semester I felt the effects of what seemed more and more to be an unpredictable future. I could no longer feel secure with the knowledge that I would be returning to school in September. I had, until the middle of this semester, assumed that I would be joining the Peace Corps when I graduated. But I found myself questioning the value of the Peace Corps in aiding underdeveloped countries and consequently its value to me. I felt disillusioned when I lost faith in an instructor for whom I had great respect. Having reached the age of twenty-one my added civic responsibilities weighed heavily upon me at the death of President Kennedy. I became involved in a relationship with a friend to whom I have since become engaged. This engagement came only after considerable revision of my once 'live happily ever after' ideas about love and marriage. My work and thinking this semester has been affected as never before by an awareness of the unpredictable. An awareness that demanded the security of direction from within myself rather than the kind of security derived from a dependence for direction on the people and institutions with which I am associated. It is difficult to believe the semester is over for I feel as if I have only just begun."

What does this history suggest about the development of autonomy? First, autonomy involves three major components: the development of emotional independence, the development of instrumental independence, and the recognition of interdependence.

To be emotionally independent is to be free from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval. The first step toward emotional independence of course, is disengagement from the parents, and we have all heard a good bit about this. June alludes to this in her comment about developing her own set of morals more or less the same as, but apart from, her parents. Her comment probably captures the typical pattern more accurately than some current stereotypes about the radical student-parent differences in values. June's case also illustrates two other facets in the development of emotional independence not so frequently mentioned: reduced dependence upon peers and reduced dependence upon institutional forms. Her increased resistance to being "taken advantage of" and "stepped on" reflects her increased ability to risk loss of approval and affection. Her willingness to venture off alone to Mexico and to develop and carry through her own plans for preparation, including raising the necessary funds, reflects her increasing willingness to move beyond the usual institutional patterns and supports, and reflects her increasing openness to the range of alternatives available to her.

Instrumental independence has two major components: the ability to carry on activities and to cope with problems without seeking help, and the ability to be mobile in relation to one's

own needs or desires. June reflects an increasing sense of ability to cope for herself. She learns better to distinguish fact from theory and becomes less dependent upon the printed word for answers. Through her independent studies she recognizes that she now can learn what she needs to know in order to do what she wants to do and that she can recognize gaps in necessary knowledge when they exist.

Upon return from her trip she expresses confidence that she could travel to another country and establish herself there without great difficulty. Although Erik Erikson calls attention to the "Wanderschaft" of youth, to the craving for locomotion I have found no other theory or research concerning this factor. Perhaps the rather aimless and spontaneous travel, the carelessness about advance planning and about arrangements for eating and sleeping, are part of testing and developing one's capacity to move freely about, to escape a bad situation or to get to one that looks promising.

Emotional independence is difficult to achieve without some sense of instrumental independence. During the semester when June earned sufficient funds for her trip she notes less dependence upon her family and Goddard for <u>both</u> moral and financial support. Development of autonomy may be limited in many college settings, not by lack of conditions fostering development of emotional independence, but rather because of the limited range of situations in which students can develop, and can demonstrate to themselves, their ability to cope with significant tasks on their own; in short, because of limited opportunities for developing instrumental independence.

Development of autonomy culminates with recognition of one's interdependencies. It is realized that parents cannot be dispensed with except at the price of continuing pain for all parties; that one cannot comfortably continually be supported without working for it; that the benefits of a social structure cannot be received without making some contribution to it; that loving and being loved are necessarily complementary. Only with clarification and resolution of the ranges within which one can give and can receive do problems of dependence, independence, and autonomy become more settled. And no final settlement occurs because changing conditions make for changing tolerances; autonomy therefore is continually recreated. June's final comments suggest this process has begun for her. She feels increased civic responsibilities as she comes of age. She hesitates to enter the Peace Corps because she questions its effectiveness. She recognizes that marriage is no rose garden. She expresses concern about the uncertainties of the future at the same time she notes increased security in self-direction. She sees herself at a beginning rather than an ending.

So, the first point is that the development of autonomy involves three major dimensions: development of emotional independence, development of instrumental independence, and recognition of interdependence. What was there about the college which seemed to facilitate this development?

Her academic work appears to be one salient factor. She

found she could write and write well, that she was reading more, that she no longer needed to view the printed word as truth. Classes were primarily group discussions aimed at clarifying one's own point of view and at "distinguishing fact from theory." Thus she was freed from dependence on others concerning what was right or wrong, freed to use her own facts to develop her own theories. Her independent studies emphasized obtaining and organizing the information available, discovering what else one needs to know, and discovering how to undertake particular kinds of learning. The primary purpose of academic study was to develop general intellectual competences and specific learning skills. Knowledge was to be acquired for use, and in the service of both immediate and long range purposes.

This classroom emphasis was supported by a curricular arrangement where there are no required courses, where students are asked to plan their study in relation to their own needs and purposes, where independent study is open to all at the beginning of the second year, where grades and examinations are replaced by self-evaluation and instructor comments and conferences, and where there is explicit encouragement to make use of off-campus resources and experiences in connection with academic studies. Thus, as June's comments indicate, when purposes develop and assume motivational force, learning activities can be organized in their service.

Successful completion of a two month non-resident term is required for each academic year. This term is most commonly used for a work experience, but with prior planning and approval the time can also be used for study, travel, or a combination of the two. As June's Mexico trip suggests, these experiences and responsibilities may have substantial impact.

The development of autonomy also is fostered when opportunities to assume positions of responsibility in the college community are available. Questions of interdependence and social responsibility must be faced and a tenable point of view developed. If a position on a particular issue is assumed, dependence upon peers and the strings attached to various classes of group membership must be confronted and dealt with.

There is one final aspect of the college setting which must be noted though it is not prominent in June's history. Only brief mention is necessary because the importance of relationships with older persons who are not parents has been long recognized. Teachers, administrators, house parents, faculty wives, buildings and grounds personnel, all may have a significant impact on the process of disengagement from parents and of reestablishment of relationships of interdependence with them, with other adults in authority, and with institutionalized expressions of social authority. Where the autonomy, and the lack of it, of older persons is highly visible, and where a student can discover and associate with those persons who represent something of what he or she would like to be, development of autonomy may be considerably aided.

This case history suggests that development of emotional independence, instrumental independence, and interdependence does occur during the college years and that the college program does play a role in this development.

Statistical Evidence

A variety of statistical data concerning such development were studied. To evaluate the development of emotional independence at Goddard, data from several sources were examined. One source was the Omnibus Personality Inventory (O.P.I.). Through prior study (2) several scales had been found to distinguish students ranked high on independence by the faculty. Four of these scales, Social Maturity, Theoretical Orientation, Liberalism, and Originality, were judged relevant to the development of emotional independence and it was hypothesized that scores on these would be higher in the last semester than at entrance. Two additional scales not included in the faculty study, Autonomy and Non-authoritarianism, were added for the final analyses and for these it was also hypothesized that scores would increase. Table 1 presents the findings for two successive groups of graduates and findings on three of the scales for eight colleges other than Goddard. Change was in the hypothesized direction on all three scales for the eight colleges, and on two the magnitude of change well exceeded that likely to occur by chance. Both groups of Goddard students changed in the hypothesized direction on four of the six scales, Social Maturity, Autonomy, Liberalism, and Originality. The Non-authoritarianism scale showed no change. Scores on the Theoretical Orientation scale were significantly lower than at entrance.

/Insert Table 1 about here/

Harold Webster (8) carried out more detailed study of the eight college data on twenty-two items which he judged to reflect increases in independence. When these items are arranged according to magnitude of change, those items which head the list concern relationships with generalized authority: school, home town, forefathers, established leadership and thought. Then come items concerning parents and religious beliefs and practices. In each of the eight institutions, statistically significant change occurred in the direction of increased independence on practically all items for both men and women. And of import for educational practice is the fact that differences from college to college are greater than differences between sexes within the same institution. Thus men and women within a particular kind of institution are more like each other in this aspect of development, than they are like persons of the same sex at a different college.

Goddard students also completed the Stern Activities Index. Three scales seem most relevant to the development of emotional independence: Abasement, designed to reflect self-depreciation and devaluation; Deference, designed to reflect sycophantic submission to the opinions and preferences of others perceived as superior; Supplication, designed to reflect dependence on others for love, assistance and protection. On the first two of these measures significant change occurred for both groups of graduates; on the third, change for the '64 graduates was

well beyond that likely to occur by change, but for '65 graduates, while in the appropriate direction, did not reach statistical significance. Actual figures are given in Table 2.

/Insert Table 2 about here/

Hypotheses were also generated with regard to the "Worries" listed in Table 3 and the expectation was that frequency of mention of all these items would decrease. As the figures reveal, the hypotheses appear to be supported for all items except one; for both sexes on three of the items, for girls only on two more, and for men but not women on the item concerning conflict with mother. It seems clear that by graduation varying aspects of family relationship are bothering students less than at entrance.

/Insert Table 3 about here/

So much for emotional independence. The fit between theory and data seems to be fairly close, and the evidence that such development does occur in college reasonably unequivocal.

The Goddard faculty study of Resourcefulness and Organization is relevant to instrumental independence. In this study more fully described elsewhere (3) faculty members independently rated semester records on four questions, and the ratings were then examined for change. The four questions were:

1. How freely does the student make use of a wide range of resources for his own learning?
2. How well does he make plans, follow through on them or modify them consciously and judiciously and then carry through?
3. How well does he discover or develop new ways of going at matters of concern to him? Of circumventing or overcoming obstacles that appear?
4. To what extent is he able to handle a variety of responsibilities and sustain good effort and performance in relation to all? How well is he able to avoid being overwhelmed or snowed under at the end of the semester or at other times when several obligations seem to coincide?

It was hypothesized that average ratings for these questions would increase.

/Insert Figure 1 about here/

Despite the rather large standard deviations, the differences between the first and fourth semester, and first and seventh semester are well beyond that which might occur by chance. In these data appear what might be called the sigh of relief, the pause that refreshes, or the fifth semester slump. There is a sharp change in behavior in the fifth semester after admission to the Senior Division. Once over the hurdle of Senior Division admission, he comes down on the other side about where

he started to take off. Fortunately perhaps, the Senior Study looms in the distance and he rather quickly begins to seek the altitude necessary to cross that final bar.

As Vispo (1), Fairbairn (5), Whitehorn (10), and others have pointed out, mature dependence, or recognition of and acceptance of interdependence, is the capstone of the development of autonomy. The Goddard faculty also studied change in this area (3). The question addressed to the students' records for rating purposes were:

1. Is the student ready and able to work with others on community affairs such as recreation events, community government, house business, etc?
2. Does the student pull together with others well on the work program? To what extent is he conscious of his role in a broader work program context, when such a relationship exists?
3. Does he seem to be aware of the relationship between his own behavior and community welfare in general?
4. Is the student tolerant of differences in behavior or in point of view on the part of other students or faculty members?

It was hypothesized that average ratings for these questions would increase.

/Insert Figure 2 about here/

Figure 2 indicates change is not spectacular. It is interesting to note that the sharpest change occurs during the third semester, and that fourth semester ratings are about as high as those for the seventh. This is consistent with Goddard Faculty observations that in the second year, students become quite heavily involved in community activities and that involvement does not increase much beyond that. We also note the regression in the fifth semester that was found for Resourcefulness and Organization.

. Summary

These ideas about the development of independence can be summarized as follows: Change occurs along three major vectors: emotional independence, instrumental independence, and recognition and acceptance of interdependencies. Development of emotional independence begins with disengagement from the parents, and rebelliousness in relation to them, to other adult authorities, and to established institutions. During this period relationships with peers and sympathetic adults provide transitory emotional support. Maturity in this vector comes when relationships of reciprocal respect and helpfulness are developed with parents and peers such that the strengths and weaknesses of self and others are recognized, and mutually satisfying relationships are sustained through vagaries of distance and disagreement.

Development of instrumental independence occurs as the confidence and capacity to carry out most of life's activities by

oneself is strengthened and as one becomes able to leave one place and to go to another when it is worthwhile to do so.

These two vectors are complementary and change in one is limited without change in the other. Both gradually culminate in identification of the various significant areas of interdependence, and with gradual definition of one's limits for giving and for receiving in the various areas required.

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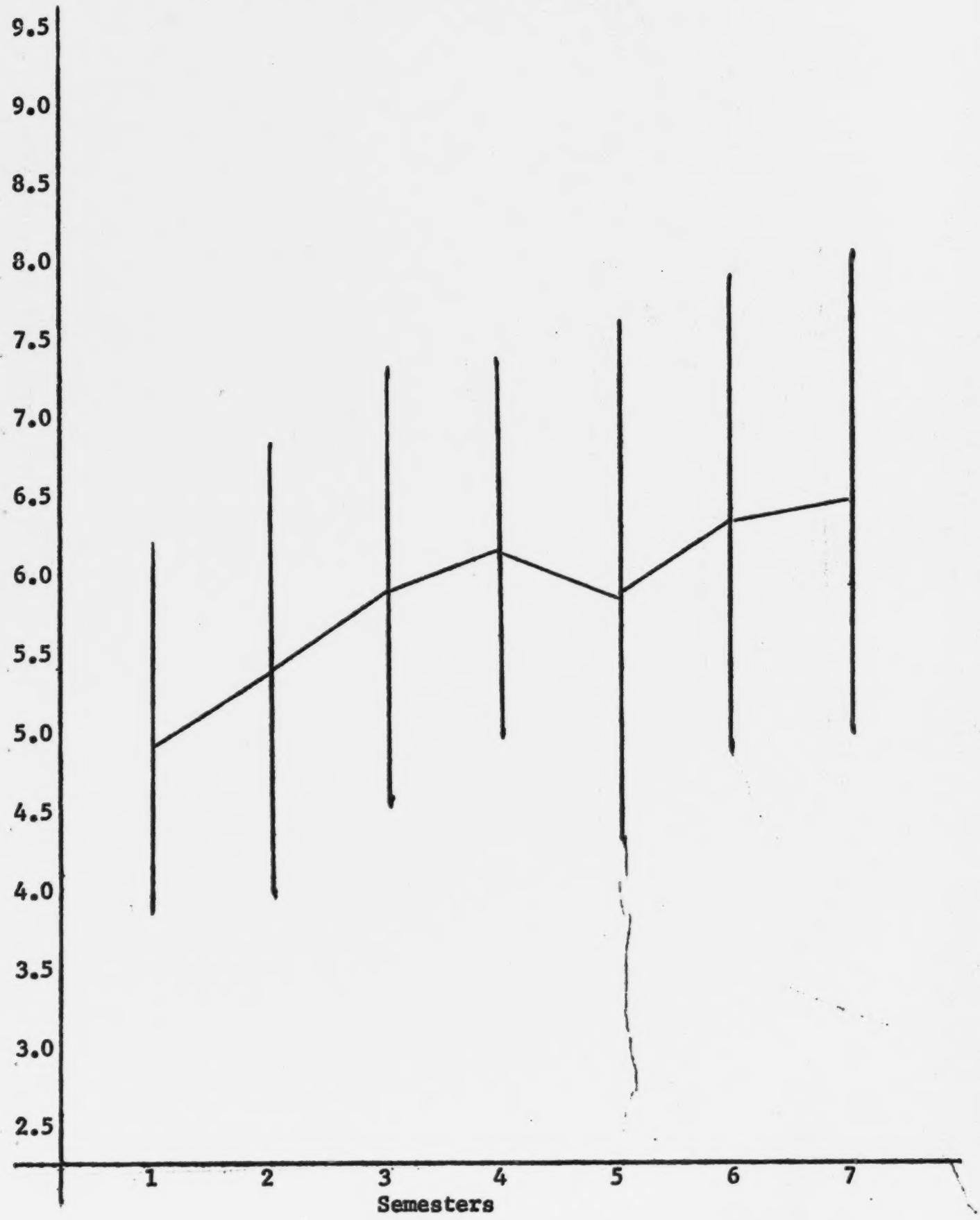
Figure 1

Resourcefulness and Organization

Vertical lines indicate range of ratings within which 2/3 of the students fell. Horizontal line connects mean ratings for 20 students.

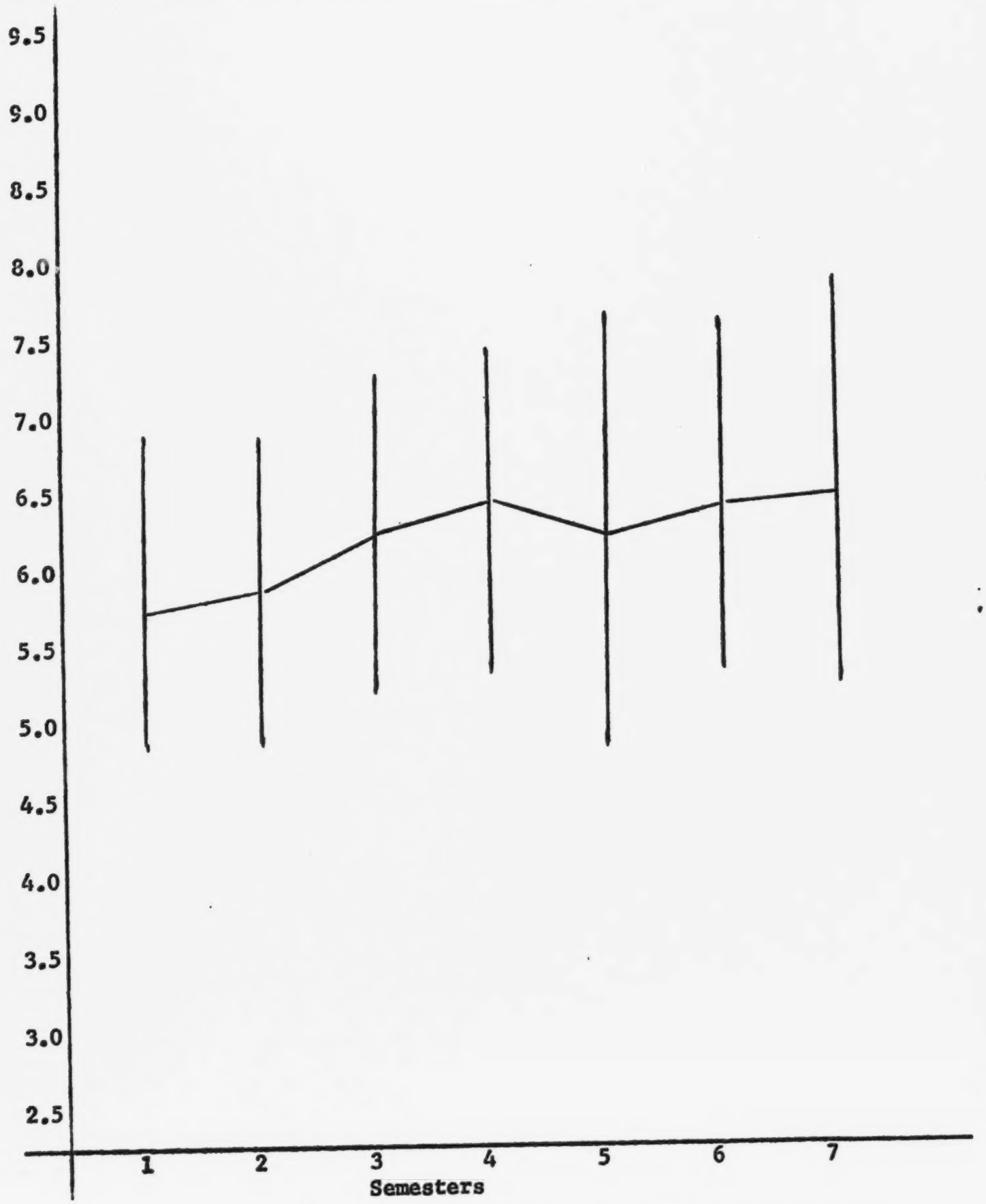


Note: Difference in means for 1st and 4th semesters likely to occur less than one time in one hundred on the basis of chance.

Figure 2

Interdependence

Vertical lines indicate range of ratings within which 2/3 of the students fell. Horizontal line connects mean ratings for 20 students.



Note: Difference in means for 1st and 4th semesters likely to occur less than three times in one hundred on the basis of chance.

Table 1

Development of Emotional Independence
Change on Scales from Omnibus Personality Inventory

Scale and Institution	Time of Testing: Entrance Mean	Entrance S.D.	Fourth Semester Mean	Fourth Semester S.D.	Eighth Semester Mean	Eighth Semester S.D.
Social Maturity						
Goddard '64	100	20	107[b]	15	107[a]	14
Goddard '65	105	17	107[a]	14	108	18
8 Colleges	81	21			96[b]	20
Autonomy						
Goddard '64	29	6	33[b]	4	33[b]	4
Goddard '65	29	7	32[a]	6	32[a]	6
8 Colleges	22	7			28[b]	7
Theoretical Orientation						
Goddard '64	22	6	24[b]	4	19[a]	3
Goddard '65	24	5	22[a]	5	20[a]	5
8 Colleges	19	5.5			20	5.3
Liberalism						
Goddard '64	58	11	61[a]	9	62[a]	7
Goddard '65	58	12	59	10	59	7
Originality						
Goddard '64	63	11	67[a]	9	67[a]	9
Goddard '65	63	13	65	11	65	16
Non-authoritarianism						
Goddard '64	14	3	15	2	14	2
Goddard '65	14	3	14	3	14	3

a = $p > .05$
b = $p > .01$

Table 2

Development of Emotional Independence Mean Scores for Stern Activities Index Scales

	Entrance	Eighth Semester
Abasement		
'64 Grads	4.0	3.1[a]
'65 Grads	4.1	3.0[c]
Deference		
'64 Grads	6.7	5.3[a]
'65 Grads	6.0	4.9[b]
Supplication		
'64 Grads	6.5	5.1[c]
'65 Grads	5.2	4.6

a = p .05
b = p .01
c = p .005

Table 3

Emotional Independence
Changing Frequencies for "Worries"

ITem	Percent Responding 2nd Sem.	4th Sem.	6th Sem.	8th Sem.
Worry about family relations because they want you to be more dependent than you actually are.	32	23	16	10
Conflict between you and your mother.	32	28	25	20
Conflict between you and your father.	32	23	23	20
Homesickness.	10	0	5	2
Worry about family relations because you are too dependent upon them.	32	20	14	26
Disagreement between you and your family on social or political issues.	15	21	23	15